

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Office of the Independent Police Auditor (IPA) continues to be a leader in the area of progressive and proactive police oversight. As a result, it has established itself as a role model for many other cities throughout the country. Officials from cities considering the IPA model of police oversight have invited the Police Auditor to speak to their communities about the IPA model of police oversight and to provide guidance and assistance to those developing their police oversight programs. The San José IPA model is recognized nationally for its success in providing alternative forum for citizens to file complaints, for the quality in which citizen complaint investigations are monitored and audited, and for its continuous community outreach programs. The IPA is committed to providing community outreach because of its recognized importance. Community outreach is the vehicle by which this office can provide education and assistance while

gaining the respect and the confidence of the community.

The effort put forth in providing community outreach is a factor that has contributed significantly to the success of the San José IPA.

As in years past, the IPA remained extremely busy throughout 2001. It was also a very exciting year bringing many new ideas and two new staff members. A Citizen Complaint Examiner has replaced the Citizen Complaint Investigator, and a new Assistant Auditor filled a vacancy. While the two new individuals became members of the IPA, the number of staff members remains the same. With the added skills these individuals bring to the IPA, it is expected that a more concentrated effort on community outreach will be possible with an emphasis in providing more expansive information to the community.

The IPA is committed to providing

the citizens of this community the highest level of service possible.

It is expected that the changes in personnel experienced in 2001 to the IPA staff will contribute greatly toward achieving this goal. The IPA customer service surveys clearly indicate that citizens are receiving the quality service that they have come to expect from the IPA. Providing the highest levels of customer service is a continuous process at the IPA, and the surveys reflect that we have met this goal, but the IPA remains vigilant, continuously searching for new ideas on how we can provide greater and better service. The IPA recognizes and embraces the expectations that the community has of the IPA, and it will continue to serve the public in an efficient, professional, and caring manner.

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

One of the three primary functions of the IPA is to increase commu-

nity awareness of the citizen complaint process. This component is one element that sets this office apart from other police oversight models. Other police oversight models do not have mandatory community outreach as part of their primary functions.

The IPA understands the importance of community outreach, and for this reason, one of the staff positions has been dedicated to increase public awareness by attending community events, conducting neighborhood presentations, and developing partnerships with the community at large.

In the year 2001, the IPA participated in 50 community events and presentations; eight of them were presentations to the youth and three to San José police officers. The IPA considers every invitation to address the public a great opportunity to inform them about the IPA and to learn about their needs and concerns.

The months of February, May,



Marketing materials used to promote the IPA office at community events.

June, September, and October proved to be the busiest months for the IPA office, averaging seven presentations per month. Community presentations were conducted at neighborhood associations, community organizations/agencies, and cities interested in starting their own police oversight program. Over 3800 people were reached through these types of community activities in 2001.

San José is an ethnically diverse city. One of the greatest challenges for the IPA is its outreach to the different ethnic groups where language can sometimes be a barrier. To overcome some of these obstacles/barriers, the IPA has established partnerships

with community leaders from the different ethnic communities who have invited the IPA office as a guest speaker to their community meetings, and who have donated their time to translate IPA literature into their own native lan-

guage. Currently, the IPA has information in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Samoan, and Korean.

In the year 2001, several bilingual presentations were conducted. At every presentation and event, IPA marketing materials were distributed, including newsletters, year end reports, brochures, and various logo items used for promoting the IPA office.

COMMUNITY PRESENTATION SURVEYS

At every community presentation, the IPA conducts surveys to identify those communities not familiar with the office and its services, as well as to learn the needs of those communities and residents. This year, there was a visible increase in the number of

people who had already heard of the IPA prior to a presentation. Some residents attributed the media; others credited IPA community outreach efforts, family members, or co-workers for learning about the office. The information gathered from these surveys is essential in providing the IPA feedback on the status of its current community relations programs, identifying areas of improvement or need, and identifying and planning future office projects and programs.

Of the residents surveyed in 2001, 74% said that they felt comfortable filing a complaint against a SJPD police officer, and 65% said they have in the past wanted to file a complaint. Over 70% reported that they have called for police service, and some of them have requested information from the police department or a police officer in the past three years.

Community presentation surveys also have another function. They assist the office in identifying those areas where residents have a high contact rate with police

officers, and the results of these contacts, whether positive or negative. The surveys provide the IPA office with an indication of some of the major concerns and/or issues that are ranked high by residents. In 2001, community members were asked to rate their major police concerns in their neighborhoods and communities. Police accountability to the public was rated as number one, followed by gangs, traffic, and burglaries/robberies. Juvenile crimes, police patrol, and graffiti were last.

PRESENTATIONS TO NEW OFFICERS

Just as the IPA finds it important to educate the public, the IPA also finds it equally important to educate new officers about the functions of the office, but more importantly, how to prevent conduct that results in receiving complaints by providing quality customer service. For this reason, the IPA has for the past two years been conducting presentations at every police academy. This year the IPA

conducted three presentations; participants included new police officers and lateral police officers. Through these presentations, the IPA is able to dispel misunderstandings or misconceptions officers may have about the office and its role.

WORKING WITH THE YOUTH

As in past years, the IPA focused resources in reaching out to the young adult community in the City of San José. The IPA worked with Santa Teresa High School, Yerba Buena High School, Overfelt High School, and agencies that serve the youth in coordinating presentations. During these presentations, the IPA was able to inform the youth about topics such as police practices and procedures, and the different ways to file complaints. The IPA was also able to dispel misconceptions about the law and police practices as well as provide the youth with suggested behavior when interacting with the police, thus helping to prevent conflict between the youth and the police.

Surveys were administered at every presentation in order to collect input on the different level of interaction youth have had with police officers, the results of these interactions, and concerns and suggestions on improving youth and police relations.

Even though there was good attendance at each youth presentation, only 70 youths participated in the IPA's surveys, and not all surveys were answered completely. Participants were asked to describe the type of interaction they have had with law enforcement, their opinion of public safety concerning their schools and neighborhoods, and suggestions to improve youth and police relations. Close to 80% of the youth surveyed said they have been stopped at least once by a police officer. The surveys indicated that over 45% reported being searched by the police; 43% said they received verbal warnings; 39% received citations and 34% were detained or arrested.

When asked how safe they feel at school, in their neighborhoods, and in their "hang out" places, they reported the following: Close to 40% said they feel very safe in their schools while 54% said they feel very safe in their neighborhoods. Thirty-one percent (31%) said they feel safe in the places they "hang out."

Aside from collecting the above information, the IPA was also interested in learning how the relationship between the police and youth can be improved. What better way to find this

information; ask the youth.

Surprisingly, this was the one question the majority of survey participants answered completely. The number one suggestion was for officers to be polite and friendly, followed by treating youth with respect and being more helpful. In addition, 30% of the participants indicated that they wish to see more officers serve as role models and mentors.

The IPA is pleased with the success of its community outreach campaign to the youth. Local agencies and youth pro-



The IPA conducts presentations at local high schools and works with agencies that work with at risk youth.

grams are requesting presentations from the IPA. Some youth programs have incorporated IPA presentations in their curriculums.

HOW THE PUBLIC RATE THE IPA AND THE SJPD

The City of San José, for the second year, commissioned a city-wide survey to measure public awareness and satisfaction with city services including the Independent Police Auditor (IPA) and the San José Police Department (SJPD).

INDEPENDENT POLICE AUDITOR

The 2001 survey revealed that:

❖ Among those people who had contact with the police, the percentage of people aware of the IPA office increased from 18% in 2000 to 26% in 2001. Of those people who had no contact with the police, only 12% were aware of the existence of the IPA office; this is down from 16% in 2000. This indicates that the IPA must continue to aggressively conduct community outreach and public awareness.

❖ Of those who were aware of the IPA, 51% rated the IPA as effective, 33% had no opinion, and 15% rated the IPA as ineffective. These results were very similar to last year's results.

SAN JOSÉ POLICE DEPARTMENT

The 2001 survey concerning the San José Police Department revealed that:

❖ About one in every four residents polled had contact with the SJPD in the 2001. Of these, three-quarters or 74% said that

the officer with whom they had contact was helpful. This was up 2% from the year 2000.

❖ The survey also indicated that 70% of the people responded that they believe that the SJPD treats people fairly. This is up from 64% in 2000.

❖ Lastly, the survey indicated that 63% of those people surveyed, who had contact with the SJPD in the year 2001, rated the officer (s) as courteous and pleasant to deal with. This was down from 77% in 2000.

★ REFERRAL SITES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE COMMUNITY ★

Parents of a youth came to the IPA office to file a complaint against two San José officers for what they felt was police harassment. The family was referred to the IPA by the Mexican American Community Services Agency (MACSA), an IPA referral site.

The parents alleged that their son was stopped, searched, and questioned about drug possession by two officers. After reviewing the information and consulting with the SJPD, it was learned that the two individuals were impersonating San José police officers. The parents filed a police report with the San José Police Department, and the case was investigated.

Thank you to MACSA for referring the family to the IPA, and to the family for coming forward with the information.

REFERRAL SITES

This is the third year for the IPA referral sites program. Referral sites are located throughout the City, with at least one in every council district. Preferred locations for referral sites are community centers or other places frequently visited by the public. The IPA provides the staff at each referral site with an orientation session on the services and functions of the IPA. Each referral site is provided with a binder that

contains information about the IPA, the citizen complaint process, and referral numbers for social and legal services. The IPA also provides each site with copies of its "Commonly Asked Questions" brochures, and newsletter. The brochures are available in six different languages:

This past year, the IPA added five new referral sites to its long list of participants. This brings the total to 36 referral sites city-wide. The first referral site was established in District 1 and more referral sites were added in Districts 3, 5, and 6. The goal of the referral sites is not to perform the duties of the IPA office, but to serve as information centers for residents who may be seeking information on the citizen complaint process. For this reason, the IPA is also working with local library branches and fire stations in displaying IPA brochures at their front counters. Currently, IPA information is available at 17 local library branches and 31 fire stations, throughout the City as well as at the customer desks of

City Hall and the San José Police Department. Accessibility to IPA services and information is one of the top priorities for the office.

PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

The IPA takes pride in being considered as one of the leaders in the profession of police oversight. In 2001, cities throughout the nation contacted the IPA for information and presentations about the IPA program. Some of these cities were Omaha, Nebraska; Austin, Texas; Fresno and Long Beach, California; Providence, Rhode Island; and Akron, Ohio. The Police Auditor also participated in the establishment of a new auditor office in the cities of Austin and Omaha.

The Independent Police Auditor routinely provides information to many cities. Every city interested in implementing its own civilian oversight program is provided with a packet of information that includes, office publications, copies of the City's Charter and Ordinance, and complete

information on the office's structure and functions. The materials also cover the history of the office, its structure and functions, and its success stories and challenges.

The Office of the Independent Police Auditor also serves as a mentor to those newly established police oversight offices by providing them with tools to get their programs started. This may include copies of community presentations on PowerPoint, copies of the layouts of office publications, and copies of job descriptions/announcements.

For all its contributions to the police oversight field, the Office of the Independent Police Auditor has received much recognition. In 2001, the office was acknowledged in Samuel Walker's recent publication, "Police Accountability – The Role of Citizen Oversight" for its success and contributions to the field of civilian police oversight. The office was commended for its proactive role in actively searching for the underlying causes of police misconduct or problems with the

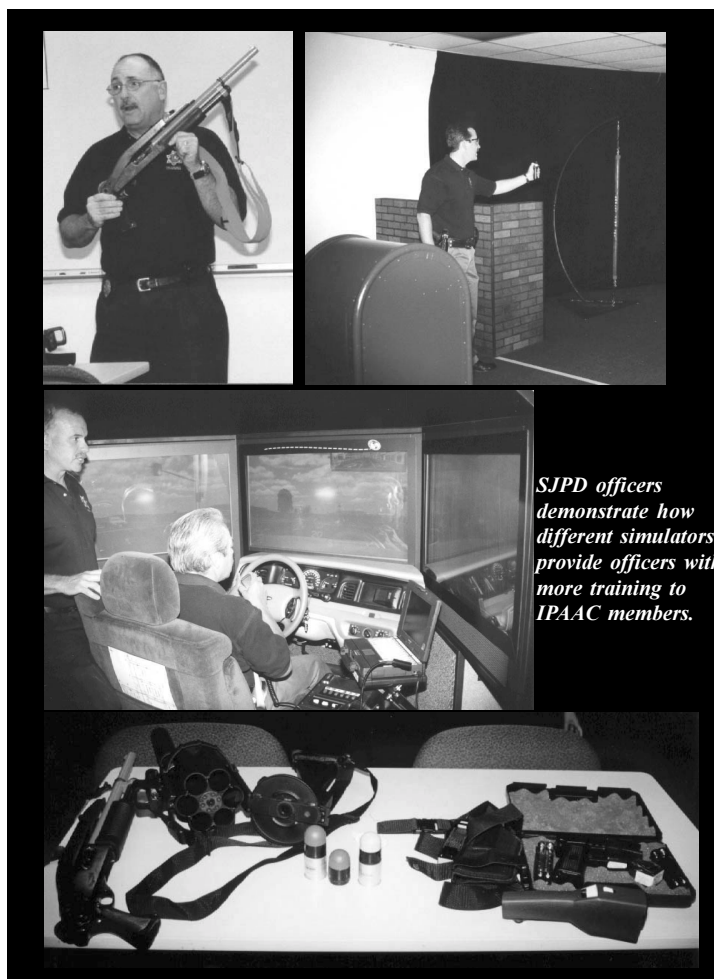
citizen complaint process. The IPA was presented with a "Breaking the Glass Ceiling" Award by the National Center for Women and Policing.

INDEPENDENT POLICE AUDITOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In 1999, the IPA formed an advisory committee called the Independent Police Auditor Advisory Committee (IPAAC)

comprised of culturally diverse community leaders. The purpose of the IPAAC is to: (1) promote the mission of the IPA and provide input/feedback on police related concerns and issues brought to its attention by the community; (2) promote the maintenance and improvement of standards of quality of police oversight in the City of San José; and (3) increase the forums, sources, and methods of informing the public about the complaint process.

IPAAC members serve at the pleasure of the Police Auditor and are required to attend a minimum of two meetings a year. In 2001, five new members were welcomed to the advisory committee bringing the total number of members to 24, among them are representatives from the following communities: Vietnamese, Mexican/Latino, African American, Filipino, Asian-American, Islamic, Sikh, and Gay/Lesbian, business, and legal community.



In the year 2001, there were a total of four meetings. One was a tour of the San José Police Department (SJPD) Training Facility organized by the IPA. At this meeting, IPAAC members and IPA staff gained valuable insight about the operation and mission of the SJPD Training Division and laws pertaining to the use of deadly force and escalating force. Officers demonstrated how the Driver and Force Option Training Simulator are used in training officers how to respond when facing calls that require split second decisions in life threatening situations. IPAAC members

also had an overview and hands-on exposure to the less-lethal weapons available to officers. Training and access to these types of weapons has been one of the most important recommendations made by the IPA.

This type of training proved to be beneficial and of much interest to the advisory committee members.

The IPA plans to continue to organize similar training sessions for the IPAAC. The goal is to provide the members with education on the police department's policies and procedures so they in turn can educate their communities. Knowing why officers do what they do gives each member a different perspective on the responsibilities of police officers.



The Independent Police Auditor, along with the SJPD Internal Affairs Lieutenant and other experts in the police oversight field shared their knowledge and experiences with NACOLE Conference attendees.

ago to provide training and a working network for people in the civilian oversight field. Every year NACOLE holds an annual conference. This year's conference, "Inclusion: The Balancing Act of Civilian Oversight," was held in Denver, Colorado. Representatives from all over the nation gathered for a one-week intense

training. The Independent Police Auditor and the Commander from the San José Police Department Internal Affairs Unit had the opportunity to present at one of the many workshops.

PUBLICATIONS

IPA year end reports and other publications are available on the

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Office of the Independent Police Auditor is an active member of the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE). The association was established over ten years



The IPA publishes an annual report and Mid-Year newsletter along with informational brochures in different languages.

IPA website at www.ci.sj.ca.us/ipa/home.html. Year End Reports are also available at the City Clerk's Office for a nominal fee. The 1999 and 2000 Year End Reports are available on audio tapes at the IPA office for people with vision disabilities. Audio tapes are free of charge and they are a donation/contribution from Books Aloud.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The IPA office has always enjoyed a professional working relationship with the media, primarily because the office has always made itself available to reporters. As in past years, the IPA worked with the local and out of town media.

The Police Auditor was a guest speaker on community and news shows. The Police Auditor conducted on-camera interviews with KTVU Channel 2, KNTV Channel 11, KSTS Channel 48, and KDTV Channel 14. The Police Auditor was also quoted/ referenced in several San José Mercury News articles, and other newspapers from cities throughout the country.



The Independent Police Auditor talks to local television reporter at one of the IPA's sponsored community forums.